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TANF FUNDING ALLOCATION DIFFERENCES IN RED VS. BLUE STATES:
EMPHASIS ON OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS AND DIVORCES

by

Camille Mindrum

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

TANF FUNDING ALLOCATION DIFFERENCES IN RED VS. BLUE STATES:
EMPHASIS ON OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS AND DIVORCES

by

Camille Mindrum, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2018

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Department: Political Science

In 1996, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) after Republicans who had promised significant welfare reform captured the House of Representatives in 1994. Like AFDC, TANF serves as a safety net that provides cash assistance to needy families, but it also attempts to incentivize values such as work ethic and two-parent family formation in order to reduce government dependence. Previous studies of TANF have relied on short-term economic trends and number of caseloads to measure success, but failed to analyze the program's success based on its original goals. Many of its goals were driven by the consensus that family structure is important for economic and social stability, so this research examined TANF funding allocation and social outcome differences between predominantly Republican (red) and predominantly Democratic (blue) states in order to analyze TANF's ability to reduce out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates.

The analysis of variance tests (one and two-way ANOVAs) provided limited, but interesting, evidence that there were differences in the average funding allocation red and

blue states provide for each TANF spending category. On average, red states allocated greater proportions of their funding to categories that were authorized solely under AFDC and otherwise inconsistent with the purposes of TANF than blue states. Additionally, out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates were different in 1996 (pre-TANF) and 2016 (post-TANF), but there was little evidence that these changes can be attributed to TANF. Similarly, blue states had significantly less divorces than red states, but it is unlikely that TANF is responsible for this difference. This is largely because states maintain a lot of discretion in how they implement TANF and most states provided very limited funding to the goals associated with family structure.

(60 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

TANF FUNDING ALLOCATION DIFFERENCES IN RED VS. BLUE STATES: EMPHASIS ON OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS AND DIVORCES

Camille Mindrum

The 1996 welfare reforms were part of a bipartisan consensus led by Democratic President Bill Clinton and a Republican Congress about the downfalls of the existing United States welfare system. Under these reforms, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which was an entitlement program that had been in effect since 1935. Similar to AFDC, TANF intended to serve as a safety net that provides cash assistance to needy families, but it also aimed to reduce government dependence by attempting to instill values in welfare recipients through stricter work requirements and eligibility criteria. The goals of TANF included promoting job preparation, reducing the incidence of births to unmarried mothers, and increasing the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Many of TANF's goals were driven by the theory that family structure is important for economic and social stability, but states have a lot of freedom in how they choose to distribute TANF funding and implement the program. This research examined TANF funding allocation and social outcome differences between predominantly Republican (red) and predominantly Democratic (blue) states in order analyze TANF's

ability to reduce out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates. There was limited, but interesting, evidence that there were differences in how red and blue states were funding TANF programs. On average, red states allocated greater proportions of their funding to categories that were inconsistent with the purposes of TANF than blue states. Most states provided very little funding to goals associated with family structure. So, while out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates were different in 1996 (pre-TANF) and 2016 (post-TANF), these changes are unlikely associated with the program. Similarly, blue states had significantly less divorces than red states, but it is unlikely that TANF is responsible for this difference.

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INTRODUCTION

After the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) was signed into law, President Clinton had fulfilled his campaign promise to “end welfare as we know it” by supplanting the previous welfare system with a comprehensive reform. The Act was a bipartisan compromise and strongly supported by Republicans who had promised significant welfare reform when they captured the House of Representatives in 1994. Under PRWORA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). AFDC was a cash assistance program for low-income families established in 1935 under the Social Security Act signed into law by Franklin D. Roosevelt. As its replacement, TANF continued to provide basic assistance to low-income families, but it also aimed to end dependence through enforcement of stricter regulations on welfare recipients such as work requirements and lifetime limits. In many ways, the new bill was an attempt to legislate morality through efforts to instill work ethic, increase formation of two-parent families, and reduce out-of-wedlock births. It was also a response to criticisms of AFDC, which included beliefs about incentivizing broken families, dishonesty, and failure to stay in the workforce (Banfield 1969). Over two decades later, the implications of this bipartisan law are still fiercely debated, so whether restructuring the welfare system was effective in achieving its goals and amending problems associated with the previous system is still unclear.

Unlike AFDC, where states were entitled to unlimited federal funds at matching rates, TANF is administered as a block grant provided to states that is capped federally at \$16.5 billion per year (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2009). States can

use their funds “in any way that supports one of the four statutory purposes of TANF” subject to few restrictions (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2009). These four goals are: “(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2015). While states are supposed to justify how they are distributing federal funds with one of these goals, there are exceptions and they are largely free to allocate funds however they deem fit. As a result, there are differences between states and furthermore, there seem to be differences between how predominantly Republican (red) and predominantly Democratic (blue) states are implementing TANF—especially when spending categories are characterized based on TANF’s goals.

Given the context of TANF’s goals, especially those based on family values, comparing Republican states to Democratic states makes sense because conservatives seem to be more protective of the traditional institution of the family. For example, red states have been more hesitant to adopt policies such as same sex marriage and comprehensive sex education. Still, a recent article in the *New York Times* proclaimed, “Yet if one looks at blue and red state populations as a whole, it’s striking that conservatives champion ‘family values’ even as red states have high rates of teenage births, divorce and prostitution (Kristof 2017). In contrast, “people in blue states don’t trumpet these family values but often seem to do a better job living them” (Kristof 2017).

It is not merely holding conservative values that lead to these outcomes, though; “the deeper problem seems to be the political choices that conservatives make,” such as “underinvesting in public education and social services” (Kristof 2017). Some of these political choices include the implementation of abstinence-based sex education programs and limited access to birth control. These policy choices, as well as decisions about how to implement TANF, could therefore have serious implications on social outcomes and economic inequality in states. The goal of this thesis is to examine these claims in a more limited but more systematic way by analyzing TANF policy implementation as well as the differences in social implications between red and blue states.

Other policy choices, in addition to TANF, could be responsible for changes in rates of births to unmarried mothers and divorces. The reason for analyzing TANF is because it replaced AFDC, which was seen by many as propagating these “social ills” (e.g. Banfield 1969). Compared to AFDC, which forced the federal and state governments to work together on welfare cases, TANF leaves decision making largely to the states themselves, which makes comparing differences between states possible and interesting (Blank 1997). TANF is also not the only new policy under PRWORA or the only contemporary welfare program. The reason it is the focus of this thesis is because it is more diverse in its function than programs like Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), making it easier to draw more meaningful comparisons.

TANF’s goals were an attempt to instill values in welfare participants in hopes of decreasing their economic dependency. There were several trends that drove welfare reform, including: households headed by single mothers are generally poorer and

therefore more likely to be receiving support from the government (e.g. Brush 2003; Legler 1996). Authors such as Robert Putnam (2016) have pointed to the importance of family structure, child development, and parenting have on inequality (248-51). More specifically, Brush (2003) claims, “central to the moralistic rhetoric of welfare reform [that was justified by the political right and left alike] were claims about the non-pecuniary value of, as well as the economic rewards for, waged work, sexual restraint, and paternal involvement” (176). The Progressive Policy Institute, a policy think-tank central to the Clinton administration, published *Mandate For Change*, where Kamarck and Galston (1993) state, “The reality, we believe, is this: America’s children are in trouble, and their troubles are rooted in both economic stress and family disintegration” (153). They continue, “Not only have recent decades seen an increase in one-parent families as the result of rising out-of-wedlock births and rising divorce rates, they have also seen an increase in the poverty of those families” (Kamarck and Galston 1993, 157-59). In short, they believed that there is a significant correlation between family structure and the economic well-being of families. Leading Republicans held similar views and the 1996 welfare reforms were influenced by this theory.

Section 101 of PRWORA (P.L. 104-193) focuses on marriage, single-parent families, out-of-wedlock births, and teenage pregnancies. The law states, “The increase in the number of children receiving public assistance is closely related to the increase in births to unmarried women.” Furthermore, “Children born out-of-wedlock are 3 times more likely to be on welfare when they grow up,” and, moreover, “Only 9 percent of married-couple families with children under 18 years of age have income below the national poverty level. In contrast, 46 percent of female-headed households with children

under 18 years of age are below the national poverty level” (P.L. 104-193, § 101). These facts, and many more, were used as economic and social justifications to use public policy in order to reduce out-of-wedlock births and increase the formation of two-parent families.

The family has long been recognized as a vital political institution. Alexis de Tocqueville points to the role families play in rearing children and educating children (2000, 558-562). According to Scott Yenor in *Family Politics* (2015), the ideas of John Locke suggested, “The educative goals of the family precede the goals of political society, for the family cultivates the rationality, civility, character, and perhaps, technical skills that allow children to become members of civil government” (29). Recently, Steven Horwitz (2015) has argued that, “the family is a necessary institution in any society ... The advantages that parents have in socializing children, for example, cannot be replicated sufficiently by schools, ‘the village,’ or the state ... even if parents are imperfect at doing so, that is not an ipso facto argument for someone else to step in, as those other institutions may be even worse at the task than imperfect parents” (7). Horwitz recognizes that family structure and purposes change over time. The essential question from him is whether current family structure is accomplishing its social objectives, especially with respect to children.

Authors such as Putnam (2015) and Murray (2012) have identified a significant divergence in familial traits between economic classes in the contemporary United States. For example, members of higher economic classes are more inclined to be married and have children within, as opposed to outside of, those marriages. In a recent Op-Ed, Wax and Alexander (2017) make similar claims in a more controversial way, claiming that not

all cultures are created equal when it comes to economic success. While it is important to consider how the economic situation of each family plays a role in children's outcomes (e.g. a wealthy single mother will face less economic barriers in providing for her children than impoverished married parents will for theirs), trends provide evidence that family structure and economic success are closely related. In general, "Women and men who have children outside of marriage ... have less education, and have lower income than married parents" (Shattuck and Kreider 2013, 1). According to U.S. Census data, "Percentages of women with a birth in the last year who were unmarried decreased with each sequentially higher income level. Women with a birth in the last year at the lowest household income level—less than \$10,000 per year—had the highest percentage, 68.9 percent, who were unmarried. In contrast, just 9 percent of women whose household income in 2010 was \$200,000 or above had a recent birth were unmarried" (Shattuck and Kreider 2013, 4-5).

Prior to the 1960s, the attributes of the American family that are often associated with positive economic outcomes, such as two-parent households, occurred "naturally"—due to societal pressures that discouraged things such as child bearing out of wedlock and divorce and an economic structure that presumed women would give up work for family. Over time, the "traditional" institution of the family, which is exemplified by the nuclear family of the 1950s and Alexis de Tocqueville's depiction of the American family in *Democracy in America*, has evolved and several diverse family forms have appeared. Paul Legler (1996) claims,

We have seen the American family undergo dramatic structural changes in the last thirty years. The skyrocketing increase in the rate of out-of-wedlock births coupled with the high rate of divorce means that more and more families are single parent families. The custodial parent in these single parent families is often

the sole source of financial support, and since that parent is often a mother with low income, millions of children are subject to childhood poverty (520-21).

Because the replacement of the “traditional” family by alternative family forms has occurred more frequently in the lower economic classes (see, e.g. Murray 2012; Putnam 2016) and some of these changes, such as an increase in single-parent families (including never-married and divorced couples) and out-of-wedlock births, are associated with social ills such as unemployment, drug usage, and incarceration (Murray 2012; Putnam 2016; Wax and Alexander 2017), TANF’s objective was multifaceted. Like AFDC, it served as a safety net by providing cash assistance to needy families. Unlike its predecessor, though, it also attempted to incentivize values tied to the traditional family because of the consensus that family structure is important for economic and social stability. Incentivizing these “family values,” similar to attempting to instill work ethic, occurred in hopes of decreasing government dependence. Because of this, it is important to consider whether TANF has been successful in its third and fourth goals, which were postulated based on the relationship between family structure, economic success, and social stability. In addition to normative questions about whether or not the government *should* attempt to interfere with private institutions such as the family, it is important to consider if the government has had the capacity to do so effectively.

Family formation goals were not the only value-based components of PRWORA. Welfare reforms under the Clinton Administration were a response to concerns about government dependency and a decline in work ethic that came largely from the political right. Edward Banfield (1969) saw AFDC as problematic because despite it being a time of low unemployment, welfare rolls were expanding (89). He suggested several potential reasons for the increasing caseload, including the effects of payment levels increasing

and causing welfare to become more attractive as a “job” and the role of welfare bureaucracies, who through various Great Society programs taught people to “regard welfare as something that is theirs by right” (Banfield 1969, 90-93). AFDC was opposed by “resentful taxpayers as well as by the poor themselves, because it made no provision for employment or training” (Frank 2017, 94-95). TANF aimed to remedy these complaints by making support work-conditioned and time-limited (U.S. Congressional Research Service 2003). While the concern about work ethic was a large component of both PRWORA and TANF, it is not the focus of this project. Instead, I look primarily at the facets of welfare reform that were based on the class divide in family structure. They comprise half of TANF’s primary goals and are less accounted for in the current literature. The third and fourth goals of TANF are fascinating because they are based on the logic that certain family structures are more economically advantageous and socially beneficial than others. Two-parent households are generally associated with higher levels of economic success than single-parent families. TANF is an explicit attempt by the government to influence the institution of the family through public policy. Has the policy had any effect on out-of-wedlock births and the formation of two-parent families?

Consequently, I have two primary research questions: 1) How do predominantly Republican (red) and predominantly Democratic (blue) states allocate TANF funding? 2) What are the differences in the average out-of-wedlock birth rate and divorce rate between red and blue states in 1996 and 2016? The first question asks how TANF is being implemented in each state. By pairing each TANF spending category with one of the four goals, figuring out differences between how red and blue states are implementing

TANF was more straightforward. I analyzed differences between red and blue states by running a one-way analysis of variance to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the proportion of funding red and blue states are allocating to each goal. There were not statistically significant differences between the percentages of funds red and blue states were allocating to the primary goals of TANF, but some spending categories do not fall under any of the four goals. For instance, some categories are authorized solely under prior law (AFDC) and otherwise inconsistent with the goals of TANF altogether. I found red states were more likely than blue states to distribute funds to these spending categories, which is interesting based on recent findings about red states such as Louisiana and Texas diverting welfare funds to fill budget holes and using substantial portions their TANF block grant for uses with “little or no connection to the program’s main goals” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2016; Uri 2017).

The second question attempts to gauge TANF’s ability to reduce the rates of births to unmarried mothers and divorce since both of these are specific goals of the program. I decided to focus on divorce (two-parent family maintenance) because in order to consider marriage (two-parent family formation), the question of how marriage and cohabitation differ becomes more of an obstacle. In order to gauge differences in out-of-wedlock birth and divorce rates before and after TANF, I looked at whether rates in out-of-wedlock births and divorce have changed since TANF’s advent in order to determine whether the policy is associated with rising or falling rates of the social outcomes associated with the program’s goals. This is important because in order to consider the success of TANF in its ability to influence family forms, I had to determine whether there has been a reduction of out-of-wedlock births and an increased maintenance of two-

parent families since both of these are goals of the policy. While outside variables definitely play a role in these rates, determining general trends still provides insight about how effective TANF has been.

Since 1997, divorce rates have decreased, but out-of-wedlock births have increased. Both findings were statistically significant. Because I found some differences in how red and blue states allocated TANF funds, I was also interested in analyzing differences in out-of-wedlock birth and divorce rates between red and blue states. In order to do this, I used a two-way ANOVA to analyze rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births in red and blue states before and after TANF was implemented. On average, there are fewer divorces in blue states, but there is no statistically significant difference in out-of-wedlock births between red and blue states. This analysis adds new and interesting elements to the current TANF debate. Instead of focusing strictly on how TANF is fairing as a cash assistance program in comparison to AFDC, this research also considers the value-laden goals that distinguish the program from its predecessor. The differences I found are interesting, but probably largely unrelated to TANF. Out-of-wedlock birth rates have been increasing at a constant rate since at least 1940 when data collection began—over 50 years before TANF was introduced (Bachrach 1998; Doyle 2006). Understanding the decrease in divorce rate is more complicated, but could be related to cohabitation becoming less stigmatized (Abrams 2016). Additionally, if cohabitation is more common in blue states, this could indicate differences between divorce rates between red and blue states; if fewer people are getting married, especially at young ages, in blue states it would make sense that the divorce rate was lower.

PREVIOUS FINDINGS

Mixed Findings of TANF Outcomes

In order to consider the success of TANF, it is critical to examine whether or not the program is effective—or has the capability of being effective—in achieving its more complex goals, such as increasing two-parent family formation. TANF’s purpose extends beyond providing a safety net to the nation’s poorest; its goals aimed at decreasing government dependence by instilling values in welfare recipients. Therefore, simply examining caseloads or short-term economic implications is not enough to determine the success of welfare reform. Other factors such as social implications related to family structure need to be considered as well.

Previous findings about the results of TANF are mixed. They often focus on reduction in caseloads as well as broad economic trends such as increased employment among single mothers (Teitler et al. 2009; Ziliak 2005). These findings are interesting, but they are not a complete measure in determining the success of TANF. Part of the reason for caseload reduction can be attributed to the cap on federal funding, which is only slightly higher than fiscal year 1995 federal expenditures (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2009). Conservative states could also be creating obstacles for welfare recipients to receive funding due to ideological beliefs about welfare. Moreover, most studies look at short-term implications, but fail to analyze more long-term effects of welfare reform (Acs and Loprest 2001; Cancian and Meyer 2004). Findings from Cancian and Meyer (2004) further demonstrate the difficulty in measuring TANF’s success, which they claim has been obscured in previous research by inconsistent measures of success as well as other measurement difficulties. Cancian and Meyer (2004)

look at three different indicators of economic well-being of previous participants: independence from government assistance, whether their income level above the threshold of poverty, and “freedom from material hardship.” Their findings highlight the variance between these measures of success: “Although the three concepts of overlap substantially, they appear to capture different aspects of success” (545). In fact, very few families in their study failed in all three indicators and even fewer succeeded by all measures (Cancian and Meyer 2004).

Wood, Moore, and Rangarajan (2008) found on average, that TANF recipients experience economic progress—including increased employment and income levels—in the years following exit of the program, but not without limits. Of their sample population, income levels remained fairly low, with almost half of participants with incomes remaining below the poverty line (Wood, Moore, and Rangarajan 2008, 24). Parrott and Sherman (2007) found several negative trends following TANF, such as recent increases in child poverty rates, single mother employment rates falling, and smaller shares of families that are poor enough to qualify for the program benefitting from the program or participating at all. They state, “our safety net for the poorest families with children has weakened dramatically” (Parrott and Sherman 2007, 375). In sum, there are several problems with the current TANF debate: many case studies focus solely on short-term implications, measures of success are inconsistent throughout the literature, studies that focus on caseloads miss other economic trends, and several studies overlook the social trends that inspired the law. The connection family stability has with welfare dependence and intergenerational poverty is worth being considered. By looking at social trends—such as out-of-wedlock birth and divorce rates—20 years after TANF

was implemented, I provide insight about the more long-term implications of the welfare program that are not centered on caseloads or economic trends alone. This analysis provides an important starting place for restructuring the welfare debate.

TANF Implementation: Differences Between States

Another problem with the contemporary TANF discussion is that it focuses on national trends without enough recognition of state differences. While looking at national trends is important, there is evidence that states fund welfare differently, especially since the advent of TANF. Looking at funding is important because it has been found to be one component of effective welfare programs within states (Rodgers 2005). A report by Assessing the New Federalism and The Urban Institute found, “Spending on child welfare activities varied considerably among the states” and “although TANF and Medicaid accounted for nearly all the federal increase nationally, TANF spending declined in 17 states and Medicaid spending declined in 12 states” (Scarcella et al. 2004, 31-32). The report acknowledges the difficulty in explaining the significant variation across states, but claims it is probably the “result of a complex array of state-specific issues” and not due to caseload differences alone (Scarcella et al. 2004, 32).

Brueckner (2000) provides evidence that replacing federal matching grants (AFDC) with block grants (TANF) created a “race to the bottom” between states, where the incentive to spend more due to matching federal funds is replaced with spending less through fear of becoming a “welfare magnet” (522). Additionally, states “attempting to reduce caseloads can devise administrative mechanisms that will make it easier for them to cut families off assistance or prevent families from coming on assistance” in the first place (Lurie 1997). This runs contrary to Banfield’s (1969) suggestion that welfare

bureaucracies under AFDC were responsible for increasing welfare rolls, which might indicate bureaucracy operation is dependent on state ideology—with red states more inclined to decrease caseloads while blue states increase caseloads. In a chapter titled *TANF Funding and Spending across the States*, Zedlewski et al. (2002) discussed other fears that came with moving to block-grant financing, stating some analysts believed “that states would use TANF dollars to supplant other spending rather than expand services for low-income families” or that “basing TANF allocations on pre-PRWORA funding,” would lock in existing inequalities in spending and benefits across the states” (225-226). These concerns existed because unlike under AFDC, where “the federal government paid at least half of all benefit costs on an open-ended basis, with federal welfare spending increasing as AFDC caseloads rose,” TANF “is funded as a block grant, providing a fixed sum (\$16.5 billion per year) through fiscal year 2002” (Peterson 2002, 433).

Some of these predictions have materialized. A report by the *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities* points to how the inequitable beginnings of TANF have only grown more inequitable over the last two decades—with poor states receiving fewer federal dollars per poor child than richer states (2017). This is partially because the state maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement locked in lower state spending obligations for poorer states, which created “a greater overall disparity in total TANF funding available per poor child among the states” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017). For example, in 1997 the TANF spending per poor child ranged from \$462 in Arkansas to \$2,860 in Connecticut (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017). Additionally, states such as Louisiana have been found using TANF funds for other uses with “little or no

connection to the program's main goals," (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities 2016). Similarly, in Texas, funding is being used to fill "budget holes" or fund "other programs that provide services to residents with higher incomes than those who qualify for cash welfare" (Ura 2017). If some states are using TANF funds for alternative purposes and welfare benefits are not reaching the impoverished people, finding out which states are diverting funds is important. It turns out there is a partisan pattern in TANF funding, with predominantly Republican states providing less TANF funds to families in poverty within their state than predominantly Democratic states.

Of the ten states allotting benefits to the fewest number of families in poverty, all voted for the Republican Presidential nominee in the great majority (at least 5 of 6) of the last six elections (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017). Of the ten states allotting benefits to the greatest number of families in poverty, all but one voted for the Democratic Presidential nominee in every election since 1996; the exception was Alaska, who ranked 10th and voted for the Republican nominee in every election since 1996 (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017). Table 1 illustrates the top and bottom ten states with party identification. While this divergence might be in part due to wealth of each state, especially in the case of Alaska (one of the wealthiest states in the U.S.), the pattern of differences between red and blue states cannot be ignored. If, for example, red states were diverting TANF funds toward programs that do not provide a safety net for their poorest citizens more frequently than blue states, this would be a significant finding. Another possibility is red states being poorer and having lower MOE requirements on average, causing fewer poor children to receive aid within these states.

Table 1
Top and Bottom 10 States Allocating TANF Benefits to Needy Families

State	Party ID	Number of Families with Children Receiving TANF Benefits for Every 100 Families with Children in Poverty	Rank
Louisiana	Republican	Less than 5	50
Texas	Republican	Less than 10	49
Wyoming	Republican	Less than 10	48
Georgia	Republican	Less than 10	47
Arkansas	Republican	Less than 10	46
Indiana	Republican	Less than 10	45
Arizona	Republican	Less than 10	44
North Carolina	Republican	Less than 10	43
Oklahoma	Republican	Less than 10	42
Idaho	Republican	Less than 10	41
Alaska	Republican	More than 30	10
Massachusetts	Democratic	More than 30	9
Rhode Island	Democratic	More than 30	8
Delaware	Democratic	More than 35	7
Hawaii	Democratic	About 40	6
New York	Democratic	About 40	5
Oregon	Democratic	More than 40	4
Minnesota	Democratic	More than 40	3
Vermont	Democratic	More than 50	2
California	Democratic	More than 60	1

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017

Political variables are not always included in TANF caseload studies, but some scholars who include it have found statistically significant effects (Bentele and Nicoli 2012, 229). Fellowes and Rowe (2004) find “liberal states have less strict eligibility policies than conservative states”—illustrating the important role constituent ideology plays in TANF policy. Soss et al. (2001) demonstrated that states with more liberal governments are more likely to adopt less restrictive TANF policies. Some researchers have found AFDC and TANF caseloads decreased more dramatically in states with Republican governors or more conservative state legislatures (Bentele and Nicoli 2012;

Blank 2001). These differences make sense given each ideology's beliefs about government assistance and dependence. In more recent works, though, (e.g. Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011, as cited in Bentele and Nicoli 2012) party control and state government ideology provide little insight about which TANF policies states adopt, so careful examination of whether or not party variables are actually driving differences between states deserves careful consideration.

In order to discern differences in how red and blue states have implemented TANF, I looked at funding allocation differences. Comparing where states are apportioning the greatest sums of money provides insight about which components of TANF red and blue states view as most important. Because states have almost complete freedom if they can justify their decisions under one of the four goals of TANF, I assigned each spending category to one goal. That way, I could compare differences between which goals were receiving the largest sums of funding in each state. While case studies examining specific provisions (e.g. how marriage counseling programs are being instituted in each state) might provide more detailed information about implementation within each state, this method provides a larger overview of TANF funding differences more generally. Accordingly, my first hypothesis is the following.

Hypothesis 1: Predominantly Republican states allocate different percentages of their funding to each goal of TANF than predominantly Democratic states

Social Value Goals and Outcomes of TANF

Research on the welfare reforms tends to focus on the economic as opposed to social implications. This could be because “the family formation objectives in TANF are notably free from accountability measures” or because “states have few precedents to

follow instructing programs to increase the marriage and two-parent family rates in the welfare population” (Lawrence 2007, 130). With little demand from the federal government on the states to promote family formation goals, there is considerable variation in implementation, even across similar (e.g. abstinence) provisions (Lawrence 2007). Still, two of the four goals of TANF revolve around family structure and are worth being evaluated. This does not mean the first and second goals are not important. In fact, a more comprehensive study of TANF’s success would require careful analysis of all four goals. The analysis here is limited to the two goals associated primarily with the institution of the family.

Multiple studies on the relationship between levels of welfare benefits and rates of marriage, divorce, and out-of-wedlock births pre-PRWORA/TANF found little or no correlation (e.g. Lundberg and Plotnick 1990; Plotnick and Lundberg 1995). Results after the advent of TANF are similar; there is little evidence that welfare waivers affected the number of families headed by females or that family cap policies, which deny additional assistance to families who have additional children while on assistance (National Conference of State Legislatures 2011), have reduced out-of-wedlock births (Fitzgerald and Ribar 2004; Dyer and Fairlie 2004). Teitler et al. (2009) actually found current and past TANF participation reduced the likelihood of marriage, but this effect was confined to the period of participation in the program and prospects of marriage returned to levels similar to women who have never participated in TANF after program exits. Research on social trends more generally shows a steady increase of out-of-wedlock births since 1940, providing some evidence that TANF has not had any “discernible effect on births to unwed mothers” (Bachrach 1998, 16; Doyle 2006, 25). However, some of these trends

could be related to TANF's work requirements, which indirectly affect family structure because requiring mothers, especially single mothers, to work in order to receive benefits, forces women out of the domestic sphere and into the workforce.

More general trends provide evidence that social attributes associated with family structure are changing, especially in lower classes (e.g. Murray 2012). Out-of-wedlock births have been steadily increasing nationwide for over 75 years, but the number of children born to unmarried women is higher in the lower classes (Murray 2012; Putnam 2016). Contemporary media has praised the recent drop in divorce rate despite the rising number of marriages, but these numbers also vary by social class and education—with the “wealthy and well-educated” more likely to get married and stay together than “those who are less well-off” (Abrams 2016). I expect my analysis to yield similar results: out-of-wedlock birth rates have increased since TANF was implemented, while divorce rates have dropped. For TANF to be successful in terms of its third and fourth goals, both out-of-wedlock births and divorces would have to decline. I argue neither of these outcomes is primarily due to TANF because limited program funding has thwarted its ability to yield any real effects. Moreover, divorce rates and out-of-wedlock birth rates have remained consistently higher in lower classes (e.g. Abrams 2016; Murray 2012; Putnam 2016), which further speaks to TANF's inability to instill values in welfare participants overall.

Hypothesis 2: The average out-of-wedlock birth rate and divorce rate are different in 1996 (pre-TANF) and 2016 (post-TANF)

Social Values and Trends in Red vs. Blue States

Social trends, such as teen birth rates, the use of abortion, and divorce do seem to

vary by state ideology (e.g. Cahn and Carbone 2010; Kristof 2017). Red states, particularly in the south, tend to have higher teen birthrates, fewer abortions, and a higher percentage of teen births occurring within marriage (Cahn and Carbone 2010, 24). At least in part, this is dependent on things such as minority population size and abundance of urban neighborhoods, so trends are not determined by state ideology alone. Regardless of other variables, there is still a notable difference in social trends between red and blue states that is worth being examined. Based on previous literature comparing social trends in red and blue states, I expect to find more frequent incidents of out-of-wedlock birth and divorce rates in red states compared to blue states. These differences cannot be attributed to state ideology alone, but comparing how social trends vary by state ideology can still provide some information about why these differences are occurring.

Like the changes in rates of out-of-wedlock births and divorce from 1996 to 2016, I expect most of the differences in social trends between red and blue states are unrelated to TANF. Two-parent family formation and maintenance were major goals of TANF, but most of the funding, which is limited in comparison to AFDC, is still allocated to basic assistance. In addition to carrying less weight than providing a safety net for the nation's poorest families, the remaining goals of TANF are largely value-based and incentivizing them with funding alone is difficult. Further, some programs that support TANF's value-laden goals, such as work and training programs, are less complex to implement than others, such as programs that can effectively promote responsible fatherhood. The third and fourth goals, which aim at increasing two-parent family formation and maintenance as well as reducing births to unmarried mothers, are difficult to implement effectively.

Hypothesis 3: Out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorce rates are higher in

predominantly Republican states than predominantly Democratic states

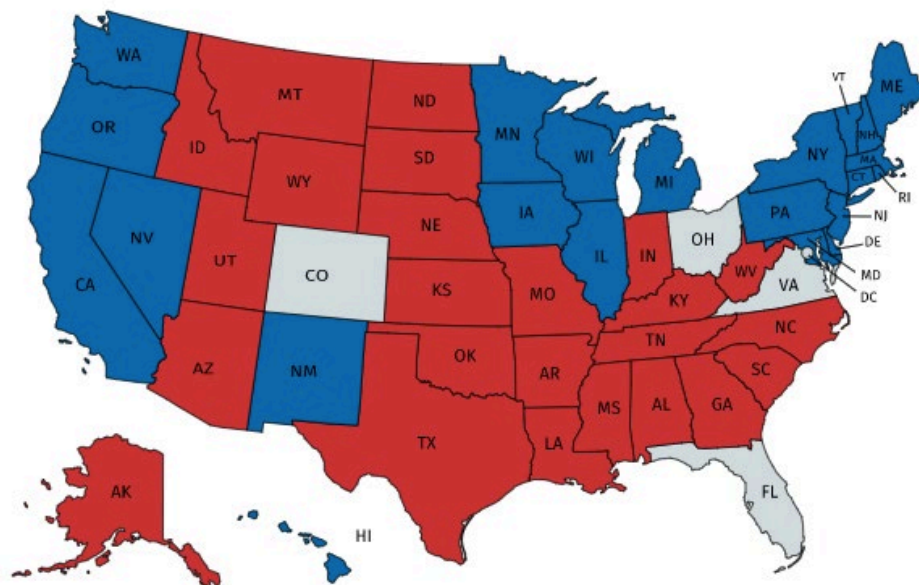
METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze differences in out-of-wedlock births and divorces in red and blue states since TANF was implemented, this project covers the years 1996-2016. 1996 represents pre-TANF implementation because the law did not go into effect until July 1997. Many studies on welfare reform look at short-term implications, but fail to analyze more long-term implications (Acs and Loprest 2001; Cancian and Meyer 2004). While 10 years (1997-2007) might have been a sufficient to determine the primary effects of TANF, it would exclude the most current data. I decided to include several years following the 2008 recession in order to avoid long-term trends being influenced by the economic downturn. Some of my analyses simply compare 1996 to 2016; with 1996 representing conditions before TANF was implemented and 2016 representing modern conditions. 2016 was used, as opposed to 2017 or 2018, because data is more readily available and it kept the comparisons consistent.

Prior to running statistical analyses to test my hypotheses, I divided states into political parties in order to compare “red” and “blue” states. Because I am examining 1996-2016, I used presidential election outcomes within each state in each year (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016) to determine which party the state voted with most frequently. If a state voted for one party in four or more out of the six elections, they were assigned that party identification. For example, because Iowa voted for the Democratic candidate in every year except 2004 and 2016, Iowa was considered a blue state for this analysis. Because there were six election years and there was the possibility of an equal distribution between Republican and Democratic presidential nominations within a state, four states were considered “swing” states and therefore excluded from the analysis

because my purpose was to compare red and blue states. These states include: Colorado, Florida, Ohio, and Virginia. There were 24 red states and 22 blue states, which are illustrated below.

Figure 1
State Party Identification Map



Source: Map created using mapchart.net

The Office of Family Assistance, which falls under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, has comprehensive TANF spending data by state with a reader's guide providing explanations of what comprises each spending category (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018). Using this information, I paired each spending category with a TANF goal. For example, "Basic Assistance," which includes, "payments on behalf of children for whom the child welfare agency does not have legal care and responsibility who are living with caretaker relatives and child support pass-through payments" can be justified by the first TANF goal, which is to "provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own

homes or in the homes of relatives” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2015).

As mentioned earlier, some spending categories do not fall under any of the four TANF goals. “Assistance Authorized Solely Under Prior Law” and “Non-Assistance Authorized Solely Under Prior Law” comprise their own category, which I designated *none* because they are authorized under AFDC and otherwise inconsistent with the purposes of TANF (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018). Funds allocated to these categories are authorized by Section 404(a)(2) of PRWORA, which says states may use the grant “in any manner that the State was authorized to use amounts received under part A or F, as such parts were in effect on September 30, 1995” or, by state choice, on August 21, 1996 (P.L. 104-193; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018). Part A is referring to “Title IV-A (AFDC, AFDC Administration, Emergency Assistance, AFDC Child Care, Transitional Child Care, and At-Risk Child Care)” and part F is referring to “Title IV-F (JOBS)” (Greenberg and Savner 1996). In other words, activities funded in these categories are allowable not because they coincide with the purpose of TANF, but because they were in effect before PRWORA was implemented.

There is also an “other” category, which encompasses all miscellaneous non-assistance activities, as well as administrative costs, which are subject to a 15% cap, that are separate because they are not inconsistent with TANF, but they do not specifically align with any one of the four goals (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018; P.L. 104-193 § 404(b)). Finally, states are authorized (under P.L. 104-193 § 404(d)(1)(2)) to transfer up to 30% of their grant to “other

purposes” including the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). Similar to programs authorized solely under prior law, transferring funds to the CCDF or SSBG cannot be aligned with any TANF goal because they are being transferred to alternative programs. In total, the 32 spending categories were divided into nine groups. A full breakdown of which TANF goal or justification each spending category was assigned to can be found below (Table 2).

Table 2
TANF Spending Categories Associated with Each Goal or Justification

TANF Goal or Justification	Spending Categories
(1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives	Basic Assistance (excluding Relative Foster Care Maintenance Payments and Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies); Relative Foster Care Maintenance Payments and Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies; Pre-Kindergarten/Head Start; Refundable Earned Income Tax Credits; Non-EITC Refundable State Tax Credits; Non-Recurrent Short Term Benefits; Supportive Services; Services for Children and Youth; Family Support/Family Preservation/Reunification Services; Adoption Services; Additional Child Welfare Services; Home Visiting Programs
(2) End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage	Subsidized Employment; Education and Training; Additional Work Activities; Work Supports; Child Care (Assistance and Non-Assistance); Financial Education and Asset Development
(3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out of wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies	Prevention of Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies
(4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families	Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Formation and Maintenance Programs
(None) Authorized solely under prior law; otherwise inconsistent with purposes of TANF	Foster Care Payments; Juvenile Justice Payments; Emergency Assistance Authorized Solely Under Prior Law; Child Welfare or Foster Care Services; Juvenile Justice Services; Emergency Services Authorized Solely Under Prior Law
(Other) Categories labeled “other”	Other, non-assistance activities that not included in other categories
(Administrative) Administrative and program management costs	Administrative Costs; Assessment/Service Provision; Systems
(Transfer to CCDF) TANF Funds transferred to the Child Care and Development Fund Discretionary	Transferred to CCDF Discretionary
(Transfer to SSBG) TANF Funds transferred to the Social Services Block Grant	Transferred to SSBG

Source: Spending categories and full descriptions from The Office of Family Assistance’s *TANF Financial Data – FY 2016*; TANF Goals found at Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2015

Figure 2

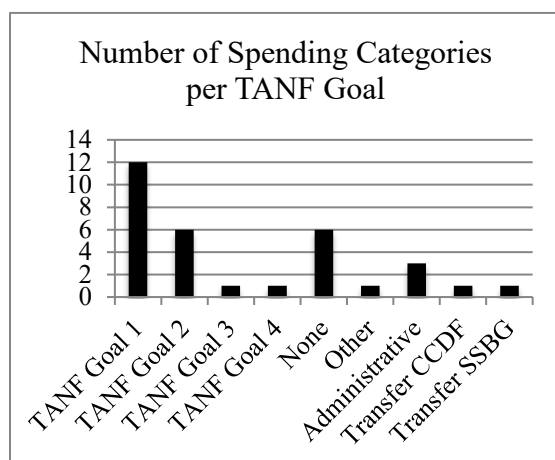
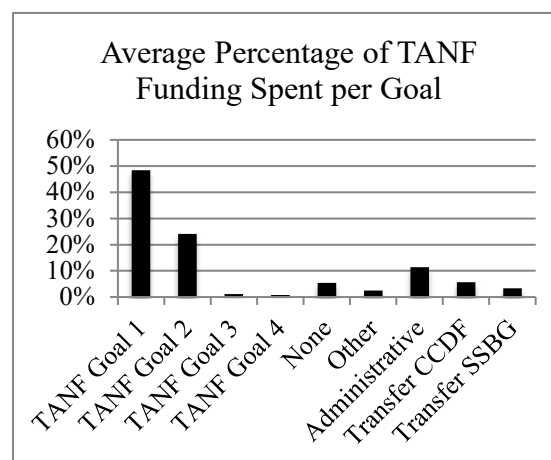


Figure 3



Source: Spending categories and funding allocation by category for Figures 2 and 3 from The Office of Family Assistance's *TANF Financial Data – FY 2016*

Pairing spending categories with the goals is important because it allows more straightforward analysis of the consequences of how states are implementing TANF. Instead of attempting to compare all 32 spending categories across 46 states, this method combines several narrow categories into groupings that are more comprehensive and easy-to-understand. For instance, instead of considering *Subsidized Employment, Education and Training, Additional Work Activities, Work Supports, Child Care (Assistance and Non-Assistance), and Financial Education and Asset Development* separately, they are all combined and considered together as every spending category associated with TANF's second goal. This also ties the consideration of funding back to the original four goals of the policy itself. I analyzed differences between red and blue states by running a one-way analysis of variance to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between how red and blue states were distributing funds to each category in 2016.

Divorce and out-of-wedlock birth rates were collected for all 46 states for the years 1996 (pre-TANF), 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) has divorce rates (per 1,000 total population residing in area) by state (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2017) for most years since 1990. No data was available for 1996, so divorce rates in 1995 were used. Using 1995 is acceptable because it still falls before TANF was implemented. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also had data for percentage of births to unmarried mothers (out-of-wedlock births), but only for 2005, 2014, 2015, and 2016 (“Percentage of Births to Unmarried Mothers by State” 2018). The data used for out-of-wedlock births for the other years came from *Kids Count Data Center* (2017), who sources their data to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Rates were compared using two-way ANOVA tests comparing 1996 to 2016 to test differences before and after TANF was implemented as well as differences between red states to blue states in both years.

Table 3
Variables and Definitions

Variable Name	Variable Type	Definition
Blue State	Independent	Any state that selected the Democratic nominee for President in four or more elections since 1996
Red State	Independent	Any state that selected the Republican nominee for President in four or more elections since 1996
Out-of-Wedlock Birth Rate	Dependent	Percentages of births to unmarried mothers
Divorce Rate	Dependent	Number of divorces per 1,000 total population in area

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a lot of variation in funding allocation even between states with the same party identification. For example, Delaware allocated only 20.83% of its total TANF funds to the first goal where Maryland used 75.79% despite both being predominantly Democratic states on the east coast (Table 3). Similarly, North Dakota distributed 20.21% of its total funds to the first goal, but Georgia used an astounding 84.09% and they are both predominantly Republican states (Table 3). The enormous differences between the lowest percentages of total funding allocated to each goal and the highest within red and blue states is responsible for the wide standard deviations. The differences are smaller in the third and fourth goal, but this is largely due to the fact much less TANF funding is used for these goals in general (Table 3).

On average, blue states spent more on the first, second, and third goal as well as in the other category where red states spent more on the fourth goal, categories authorized solely under prior law (*none*), and administrative costs (Table 3). Red states also transferred more funds to both the CCDF Discretionary and the SSBG (Table 3). However, because of large variation within states of the same party identification, the only difference that reached statistical significance at the .05 level was the difference between spending allocated to categories authorized solely under prior law (*none*) in red and blue states; red states spent significantly more in these categories (Table 4). This suggests that other variables, such as state wealth, geographic region, and religiosity would likely provide more insight about differences in TANF funding than state ideology alone.

Table 4
TANF Funding Allocation per Goal by State Color, 2016

<i>TANF Goal/ Justification</i>	<i>State Color</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Goal 1	Blue	49.60 (3.46)	16.24	20.83	75.79
	Red	47.21 (3.36)	16.45	20.21	84.09
Goal 2	Blue	24.09 (3.50)	16.40	4.33	65.61
	Red	18.78 (1.64)	8.018	4.00	34.46
Goal 3	Blue	2.06 (0.96)	4.51	0.00	16.11
	Red	0.30 (0.09)	0.42	0.00	1.66
Goal 4	Blue	0.67 (0.29)	1.34	0.00	4.69
	Red	0.76 (0.25)	1.21	0.00	4.88
None	Blue	1.45 (0.40)	1.85	0.00	5.05
	Red	9.47 (2.71)	13.29	0.00	54.42
Other	Blue	2.59 (1.22)	5.72	0.00	22.92
	Red	2.34 (1.15)	5.62	0.00	21.31
Administrative	Blue	11.22 (1.65)	7.76	2.75	36.55
	Red	11.50 (1.70)	8.35	2.75	42.61
Transfer to CCDF	Blue	5.32 (1.14)	5.35	0.00	15.81
	Red	5.98 (1.54)	7.53	0.00	20.54
Transfer to SSBG	Blue	3.00 0.50	2.35	0.00	7.03
	Red	3.66 (0.67)	3.30	0.00	9.63

Note: N=46; 22 blue states, 24 red states. Numbers in cells are percentages that illustrate average percentage of funding allocated to each goal by state color. Standard errors are in parenthesis.

Table 5
Differences in Average Funding Allocation per Goal by State Color, 2016

<i>TANF Goal/ Justification</i>			<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Goal 1	Between Groups	(Combined)	65.718	65.718	.246
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	65.718	65.718	.246
		Weighted	65.718	65.718	.246
Within Groups		11758.54	267.240		
Total			11824.26		
Goal 2	Between Groups	(Combined)	323.97	323.973	2.001
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	323.97	323.973	2.001
		Weighted	323.97	323.973	2.001
Within Groups		7124.91	161.930		
Total			7448.89		
Goal 3	Between Groups	(Combined)	35.25	35.249	3.593
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	35.25	35.249	3.593
		Weighted	35.249	35.249	3.593
Within Groups		431.659	9.810		
Total			466.909		
Goal 4	Between Groups	(Combined)	.078	.078	.048
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	.078	.078	.048
		Weighted	.078	.078	.048
Within Groups		71.465	1.624		
Total			71.543		
None	Between Groups	(Combined)	738.000	738.000	7.848**
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	738.000	738.000	7.848**
		Weighted	738.000	738.000	7.848**
Within Groups		4137.521	94.035		
Total			4875.521		
Other	Between Groups	(Combined)	.720	.720	.022
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	.720	.720	.022
		Weighted	.720	.720	.022
Within Groups		1414.366	32.145		
Total			1415.086		
Admin	Between Groups	(Combined)	.905	.905	.014
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	.905	.905	.014
		Weighted	.905	.905	.014
Within Groups		2867.272	65.165		
Total			2868.177		
CCDF	Between Groups	(Combined)	5.013	5.013	.116
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	5.013	5.013	.116
		Weighted	5.013	5.013	.116
Within Groups		1904.992	43.295		
Total			1910.005		
SSBG	Between Groups	(Combined)	5.090	5.090	.611
		Linear Term			
		Unweighted	5.090	5.090	.611
		Weighted	5.090	5.090	.611
Within Groups		366.626	8.332		
Total			371.716		

Note: States are grouped by color; *F* represents the differences in average funding allocation percentage between and within states by color group.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

While the only category that reached statistical significance at the .05 level was *none*, this is still an important finding. This provides evidence that red states are generally using more of their block grant to fund activities that are authorized solely under prior law (AFDC) and considered inconsistent with the purposes of TANF than blue states. Combined with evidence that states like Louisiana and Texas are using welfare funds to fill budget holes and other purposes, it provides reason to further question how states are using TANF funds (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2016; Uri 2017). The likelihood of TANF being successful decreases if states are diverting funds intended to accomplish the program's goals to programs that have little to do with the program at all. This is especially true when the already very limited source of federal funding is taken into consideration.

In addition to looking at differences in funding priorities between red and blue states, I wanted to gauge rates of out-of-wedlock births and divorce in red and blue states before and after TANF was implemented in order to analyze social implications of the program. While changes in rates cannot be solely attributed to TANF, it is still informative to look at general trends because although it provides less insight about other reasons why rates might be changing, such as the increasing trend of cohabitation, it can still help determine whether TANF has been successful in its third and fourth goals.

There has been a steady increase in the rate of out-of-wedlock births in both red and blue states (Table 5) since TANF's advent. This could be because of the increased rate of cohabitation, but is still illustrative of the welfare system's inability to decrease out-of-wedlock births. Under TANF, each state is supposed to "Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and establish

numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy of ratio of the state” (P.L. 104-193 § 401). This can include any program that provides “sex education or abstinence education and family planning services” (Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018). Because this goal is so broad, states have a lot of flexibility in creating programs under it, so comparing specific programs between states would likely provide more insight about differences between red and blue states than comparing funding distribution.

Table 6
Average Out-of-Wedlock Births by State Color and Year

<i>State Color</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Blue	1996	31.05	5.09
	2016	38.34	5.83
Red	1996	31.21	6.34
	2016	39.77	7.63
Total	1996	31.13	5.71
	2016	39.09	6.79

Note: Dependent variable is the percentage of births to unmarried mothers. N=46; 22 blue states each year, 24 red states each year.

The reason studying program implementation within each state would be informative is because it is possible more conservative states are inclined to institute abstinence-only sex education where more liberal states implement comprehensive sex education programs. Two states could divert very similar amounts of funding to programs intended to reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births, but the nature of these programs might be affecting the rate more than funding itself. Additionally, very minimal amounts of TANF funding are diverted to the third goal so differences in out-of-wedlock rates before and after its implementation are unlikely related to the program itself. It is impossible to know if states allocated more funds to the third goal of TANF in general,

they would have rates of out-of-wedlock births that were significantly different than they were before TANF was implemented. While it is possible to compare states with the highest levels of funding in this category to states with the lowest, the findings would still be limited because the average percentage of funding allocated to this goal in 2016 was less than 5% (Table 3).

Differences in out-of-wedlock birth rates were only statistically significant for the variable *year* (1996 vs. 2016) (Table 6). State color and the interaction variable between *state color* and *year* were not statistically significant (Table 6). This means the out-of-wedlock birth rate was significantly higher in 2016 than 1996, but there was no significant difference between out-of-wedlock birth rates between red and blue states even when the state color was interacted with the year. Because neither the difference in TANF funding between red and blue states and the difference in out-of-wedlock birth rate between states is significant, it is unlikely the change seen between 1996 and 2016 is due to TANF. Instead, it provides evidence that TANF has had little impact on out-of-wedlock birth rates and births to unmarried mothers have simply continued to rise the way they have since the 1940s. This relationship makes sense given the limited amount of funds allotted to TANF's third goal across all states on average.

Table 7
Differences in Out-of-Wedlock Birth Rates by State Color and Year

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Corrected Model	1479.53 ^a	3	493.177	12.327**
Intercept	113075.73	1	113075.725	2826.395**
State Color	14.40	1	14.401	.360
Year	1443.32	1	1443.315	36.077**
State Color * Year	9.10	1	9.087	.227
Error	3520.62	88	40.007	
Total	118401.24	92		
Corrected Total	5000.15	91		

Note: Dependent variable is the percentage of births to unmarried mothers. N=46, 22 blue states each year, 24 red states each year.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

a. R Squared = .296 (Adjusted R Squared = .272)

Unlike out-of-wedlock birth rates, divorce rates have actually fallen since 1996 in red and blue states alike. This has been documented in several places (e.g. Abrams 2016; Anderson 2016; Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2017). In 1996, the average divorce rate—measured per 1,000 total population in area—was 4.63 and in 2016 it had dropped to 3.18 (Table 7). The average divorce rate was higher in red states than in blue states in both 1996 and 2016 (Table 7). Differences in divorce rates were statistically significant between state color and year, but not for the interaction variable *state color*year*. The reason the interaction variable is not statistically significant is probably because the other variables alone account for the variance. It was included to keep out-of-wedlock birth and divorce rate analysis consistent. Divorce rates were significantly higher in 1996 than 2016 as well as higher in red states compared to blue states.

Table 8
Average Divorce Rate by State Color and Year

<i>State Color</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Blue	1996	4.10	1.35
	2016	2.89	0.65
Red	1996	5.15	0.96
	2016	3.42	0.63
Total	1996	4.63	1.26
	2016	3.18	.69

Note: Dependent variable is divorce rate, measured per 1,000 total population in area. N=43 in 1996: 21 blue states and 22 red states; N=40 in 2016: 18 blue states and 22 red states. Missing data omitted from sample.

While the decrease in divorce rate findings are interesting, this does not mean TANF has effectively reduced the incidence of divorce. In fact, red states spend more on the fourth goal than blue states (although this difference is statistically insignificant), but on average have higher rates of divorce. Additionally, the maximum percentage of total TANF funds allocated to the fourth goal in any state is less than 5%. It seems impossible that less than 5% of total TANF funding could reduce divorce rates nationally at statistically significant levels. Finally, programs can include anything from marriage education programs to “public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage” (Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018), so further analysis of specific programs within each state would be necessary to gain insight about whether TANF played a role in these differences at all.

Table 9
Differences in Divorce Rates by State Color and Year

<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Corrected Model	58.278 ^a	3	19.426	21.85**
Intercept	1247.000	1	1247.000	1402.30**
State Color	12.851	1	12.851	14.45**
Year	44.349	1	44.349	49.87**
State Color * Year	1.349	1	1.349	1.517
Error	70.251	79	.889	
Total	1413.680	83		
Corrected Total	128.529	82		

Note: Dependent variable is divorce rate, measured per 1,000 total population in area. N=43 in 1996: 21 blue states and 22 red states; N=40 in 2016: 18 blue states and 22 red states. Missing data omitted from sample.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

a. R Squared = .453 (Adjusted R Squared = .433)

CONCLUSION

The question of legislating morality is a complicated one; the normative discussion about whether or not government should attempt it—as they did in the 1996 law—is an interesting one, but equally important is deciding whether government can even do so effectively when they do try. TANF’s value-laden goals, such as increased formation and maintenance of two-parent families, are based on studies that have associated certain family structures with better economic prospects (e.g. Murray 2012; Putnam 2016; Wax and Alexander 2017). Even work promotion, which is a huge component of TANF, has been tied to ideas about responsible fatherhood (e.g. Curran and Abrams 2000). The idea was that by incentivizing certain family structures and values, families that participated in TANF programs would become economically independent through incentives that pushed them to take the “traditional” form of the family. On its face, this idea holds a certain degree of merit. However, there are several problems with TANF, especially in its role as a morality policeman.

My original interest in comparing red and blue states came from studies noting substantial differences in the number of people in poverty receiving TANF benefits within each state (e.g. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2017) and studies about differences in family values within each state (e.g. Cahn and Carbone 2010). Initially, I thought because red states have been found diverting TANF funds to programs authorized solely under prior law (AFDC) and to fill budget holes (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2016; Uri 2017) social outcomes, such as higher rates of divorce, were higher in these states because they were not adhering to TANF’s original goals. However, there is little evidence for this theory. Instead, both red and blue states seem to allocate

similar percentages of their TANF funding to each of the four primary goals of TANF. There were statistically significant differences in how much red and blue states were allocating the “*none*” category, providing some evidence that red states are more inclined to allocate funds to programs that are authorized solely under AFDC and are otherwise inconsistent with the purposes of TANF. This provides limited evidence for my first hypothesis, but it is unlikely this difference has greatly contributed to social differences between states. More careful consideration of the types of specific programs under this category would be required to understand why this trend is occurring. Additionally, while there do seem to be differences between how red and blue states are implementing TANF, analysis of funding allocation alone cannot flesh out these differences.

There was a statistical significant difference between rates of out-of-wedlock births and divorces in 1996 and 2016, providing evidence for my second hypothesis. Out-of-wedlock rates have increased, which is not a surprise considering the upward trend of this phenomena since the 1940s when it was first measured (Bachrach 1998; Doyle 2006). This also provides evidence TANF has been unable to reduce the rate of births to unmarried mothers, despite it being a primary goal of TANF with incentives provided to states that reached “annual numerical goals” (P.L. 104-193 § 401). At least in part, this is due to the limited funding states have decided to allocate to this goal. On average, blue states diverted only 2.06% and red states 0.30% of their total funding in 2016 to programs specifically intended to reduce out-of-wedlock birth rates. States are free to allocate funds however they deem fit as long as they justify it with any one of the four goals; it is obvious most states have decided to fund the first and second goals of TANF much more frequently than the third and fourth. This makes sense given the nature of

each goal. The first and second goals, which provide basic assistance and job preparation activities to recipients, are much easier to implement with funding alone. While agreeing a reduction in out-of-wedlock births and divorces might be economically advantageous, it is much more difficult to accomplish these goals; even knowing where to start seems impossible. Some public policy choices, such as establishing abstinence-only sex education programs statewide, might contribute to rates of out-of-wedlock births, but it is unlikely TANF has been very effective at influencing these rates at all.

In contrast, divorce rates have dropped since 1996, which also provides evidence for my second hypothesis, but again, the reach of this finding is limited. TANF aimed to increase the maintenance of two-parent families and a reduction in divorce rates supports this goal. However, despite linear association, TANF is probably not the cause for this change for several reasons. First, although statistically insignificant, red states spend more on average on the fourth goal than blue states, which is inconsistent with the statistically significant finding that blue states tend to have lower rates of divorce. Second, like the third goal, very limited amounts of total funding are used for the purpose of the fourth goal. In any state, the maximum percentage of total funds allocated to programs designed to increase the formation and maintenance of two-parent families was less than 5% in 2016. The likelihood that less than 5% of funding could reduce divorce rates nationally at statistically significant levels is miniscule. Third, despite divorce rates falling, differences between classes have persisted—with people in lower classes more likely to get divorced than their upper-class counterparts (e.g. Abrams 2016; Murray 2012; Putnam 2016). Finally, TANF programs under this goal range from marriage education programs to “public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage”

(Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance 2018), so analysis of specific program implementation within each state would be required to provide additional insight about whether TANF played any role in these differences.

The findings for my third hypothesis are mixed. There are statistically significant differences in divorce rates between red and blue states with red states having higher divorce rates on average. As Kristof (2017) pointed out, this is interesting because it appears blue states are practicing “the family values red states preach.” However, this statement is somewhat misleading. Divorce rates might be higher in red states not due to lack of conservative values, but because the populations are less educated, poorer, and more likely to marry early (e.g. Kristof 2017). Unlike divorces, there were not statistically significant differences in out-of-wedlock birth rates between red and blue states. This statistic likely does not tell the whole story, though. Other studies that have suggested higher teenage marriage rates and birth rates occurring in red states could help add another dimension (e.g. Cahn and Carbone 2010). Again, though, these rates are probably not driven by TANF funding differences between red and blue states because the percentage of total funds provided for either of these goals is inadequate to make any real difference.

Like Cahn and Carbone (2010), I think “genuine family transformation” will not occur “without addressing the growing inequality that has exacerbated the pressures on family life,” such as the pressure on poorer families, who might benefit from delayed childbearing, to marry quickly in fear of marital prospects declining (14). With limited funding, TANF can only do so much. It is impossible for the program to provide basic assistance, work training, and attempt to incentivize two-parent family formation without

serious reform. Moreover, other public policies, such as sex education in schools and increased access to inexpensive birth control, might be more effective for obtaining family formation goals than TANF. If the federal government is still serious about the value-laden goals associated with welfare reform, careful consideration about the program's ability to accomplish these goals needs to be examined more closely.

The third and fourth goals of TANF have not been implemented in a way that has yielded results in rates of births to unmarried mothers or divorces, but this does not mean it has failed entirely as a program. With capped federal funding that has grown little since its introduction in FY 1997, the mixed results are understandable. Potential TANF reforms could include increased federal funding, especially to poorer states, as well as increased cooperation among states. Federal funding caps should be evaluated with consideration of inflation and current poverty levels. If red states have lower MOE requirements on average, causing fewer poor children to receive aid, careful consideration of federal TANF funding distribution should be reevaluated—based not on the previous year's MOE within each state, but on an analysis that determines which states could benefit from additional funding or program restructuring. Finally, cooperation between states could help replicate programs that are working and eradicate or reform programs that are not.

Any TANF reform debate would require understanding that providing basic assistance, as AFDC did, while simultaneously attempting to incentivize work ethic and family values is very difficult, if not impossible, especially without additional funding and resources. Recognition of potential failings of the program should be considered cautiously. Concluding that TANF has the means to accomplish all four goals is unfair to

the program and deeper understanding about the root of its shortcomings is the first step in working towards effective reform. Furthermore, it is worth considering whether TANF's goals are being ignored by states altogether because of their flexibility in program implementation. Instead of driving welfare implementation within states, the original four goals of TANF do not seem to matter. Alternative state motives, which often seem to have little relation to the program's original intent, have taken priority.

Future research should carefully consider metrics of "success" when analyzing TANF. Previous research shortcoming stem from inconsistent measures as well as measurement difficulties that make comparing results difficult. This project considered new components of success, which are often ignored in the welfare debate. Political conservatives and moderate Democrats saw AFDC as a failure because it left the nation's poorest dependent on government assistance instead of helping them reach self-sufficiency. TANF was a departure from previous welfare programs because its goals were driven by the bipartisan agreement to incentivize values associated with positive economic results, such as work ethic and traditional family formation. However, there is little evidence that the program has been able to accomplish these goals, which might suggest the bipartisan consensus has dissolved. Because of this, simply considering caseloads or economic trends such as poverty rates alone is not sufficient in determining whether TANF was successful. Steps towards more comprehensive analysis of TANF's goals and outcomes need to be considered based on deeper understanding of what the program set out to accomplish in the first place.

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